Transcribing Census documents

Basics:

1. Select the appropriate template. There is a template for each census year. Always use the census template that corresponds to the year you are processing.
2. Save the template in the following format: 1911 RoSt – Chris Smith - i.e., the year, the first two letters of each word in the street, and your name.
3. Save your work regularly and make a back-up on your desktop.
4. Please do NOT alter the structure of the template in any way. They are set out in a form that will make it easy to collate all the censuses at the end.
5. When completed, change the name of the file to 1911 RoSt 01-27 – Chris Smith where 01 and 27 are the first and last house numbers.

Guidelines for transcribing:

* Complete the header information (top line on the template) first. This often gets forgotten if left until the end.
* For the 1841 – 1901 censuses the PRO (Public Record Office) number is at the bottom or on the right of the census on a separate strip and looks a bit like this: RG 12/1034
* The schedule numbers refers to the household, so there may be more than one per house number.
* Please complete the *house number* and *schedule number* for every line, even though they are usually just shown for the first occupant of that household on the census.
* Please complete the *number of rooms* (1891 census only) for each occupant in that household.
* Please enter names as they appear on the census even if abbreviated. Only enter a *title* if one is given.
* As a rule, we try to enter the data as it appears on the census – mistakes included. But there is a limit to this. For example, you will come across Do or do a lot which means ditto. In this case do not write Do or do - enter the full text.
* For *relation to head* enter the word in full e.g. Daur should be enter as Daughter.
* For *condition* write M (for married), S (for unmarried), W (for widowed). Leave blank if blank.
* The *where born* field is split into 3 fields on the template – place, county, and country. You only need to enter what’s on the census. So if they put Brighton and nothing else, you do not need to add Sussex and England.
* For London (and some other cities) it is not always clear. Always put London in the TOWN field. If a place within London is also given (e.g. Islington, London) write Islington, London in the TOWN field. If London, Middlesex is given put London in TOWN and Middlesex in COUNTY. But put City of London in the COUNTY field.
* As ever, Google is your friend. If you are having trouble deciphering a word, particularly in the *occupation* or *where born* fields try googling your best guess.
* There are quite a few useful sites that list old occupations. Use them.
* If you are struggling with a word, try to find the letters in other words on the page that you can read. And feel free to ask the other people in the room. A different pair of eyes may see something you’ve missed.
* If you can’t get a word after all that, enter a ? and write a comment in the COMMENT field.
* Make notes of things you’ve struggled with. You’ll be surprised how much you forget and will find yourself puzzling over a word that caught you out only the week before.
* Don’t forget to add your name in the *volunteer* field. Your contribution will be acknowledged once the data is transferred to the online database.
* When you’ve finished, sense check your work e.g. do the house numbers make sense? A common mistake is to confuse them with the schedule numbers. Are all the entries in the County field actually counties? Turn the auto-filter on and scan the filter list for each field – it’s a quick way to spot glaring mistakes.

Finally:

* Don’t panic! It gets easier the more you do.
* Always ask if you’re not sure. We are a friendly bunch.
* Take your time. Accuracy is more important than speed.
* Enjoy ☺